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# THE ART OF THE PHOTOPLAY

BY

EUSTACE HALE BALL

LATE SCENARIO EDITOR, STAFF PLAYRIGHT AND DIRECTOR  
FOR RELIANCE, ECLAIR, SOLAX, MAJESTIC, EXCELSIOR  
AND OTHER COMPANIES; NOW PRESIDENT OF  
THE HISTORICAL FILM COMPANY



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To 5-6:15: Dinner, Face, Paper

*That splendid band of good fellows: the Playwrights,  
the Directors, the Actors, the Critics, the Editors,  
the Publicity Men and the Owners who have  
built up the motion picture industry to  
its present success, ever fighting  
for higher standards—*

**MY FELLOW-MEMBERS OF THE  
SCREEN CLUB OF NEW YORK**

*this book is fraternally dedicated by the author.*



# CONTENTS

## PAGE

FOREWORD . . . . . 7

## CHAPTER I.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE SCENARIO 11

## CHAPTER II.

THE THEME OF THE PHOTOPLAY . 33

## CHAPTER III.

DRAMATIC PRINCIPLE . . . . . 45

## CHAPTER IV.

THE MECHANICS OF THE SCENARIO. 64

## CHAPTER V.

SAMPLE SCENARIOS. . . . . 80

## CHAPTER VI.

EPILOGUE . . . . . 116



## FOREWORD.

**T**HE marvelous growth of motion picture drama during the last ten years has reached the point where more than seven million Americans attend the exhibitions daily. The interest on the Continent is even more marked.

It is conservatively estimated that not less than ten thousand plays are produced yearly in the United States.

This means that there is a constantly increasing demand for the scripts from which the plays are to be produced.

In the early days of the photoplay profession the directors adapted their own ideas and crude indeed many of them were. The field of melodrama and slapstick comedies of familiar and ancient vintage soon became exhausted.

The result was that the companies were compelled to reach out for original scenarios from fresher sources than the minds of the over-worked producers. This developed a definite market for good ideas, and as the technique of production was improved in the

studios, so grew the need for better scenarios. With the rivalry of the increasing number of companies grew more frequent releases.

So, to-day there is an absolute demand for well-conceived, carefully written and strongly original photoplay scripts dealing with comic, tragic, historical, educational and moral themes. There are more than ten thousand needed for the coming year. The staff playwrights are unable to keep up the pace, and it is necessary to get new material from all parts of the land to maintain freshness and undiminished appeal for the millions of enthusiastic photoplay spectators.

Ideas, unique and powerful, are valuable, and although not written in scenario form are very often well rewarded. Brief scripts, outlining themes of potential dramatic power are even more valuable, and can be rewritten by the directors and scenario editors.

But the well-executed, thoroughly practical and professional type of photoplay scenario, which can be handed to the producing director as it has been purchased, for immediate and unaltered staging, without the additional expense and delay of rewriting, is the one which is worth the most to a motion picture company.

It will bring the highest price. It will instill with the scenario editor, the director and eventually the owner of the studio a desire to have more scripts from that same capable author. That desire means more sales, more publicity for the photoplaywright, and eventually a lucrative profession, of never-stale, ever-improving opportunity.

The development of the technique of good photoplay creation leads to a skill in dramatic composition which can be applied to original compositions for theatrical productions and literary work of the broadest nature.

To learn how a scenario is received and produced, through the various stages of the studio and outdoor work; to learn what are its essentials; to learn the technical needs of the companies, and the drawing and selling power of various kinds of motion picture plays; to learn how to sell the themes and their dramatic presentation to the best companies is necessary for steady success.

To impart that knowledge, simply, honestly, and with absolute practicality is the purpose of this book.





# THE ART OF THE PHOTOPLAY

## CHAPTER I.

### THE ADVENTURES OF THE SCENARIO.

**T**HE scenario editor enters his sanctum in the morning pessimistically. He has reason to be sad.

On his desk he beholds a hundred manuscripts, in multi-hued, many-shaped envelopes of which perhaps one-third were delivered with postage due, because their readers were thrifty.

With a sigh, and deprived of the solace of the fragrant weed (for smoking is strictly prohibited by fire laws within the precincts of the studio building), he unlimbers his weather-beaten paper knife and begins another day of the Quest of the Golden Play!

Plays founded, as lengthy missives on perfumed paper inform him, on the author's romances; dramas adapted from the tales of ancient Rome, comedies kidnapped from

ancient jest-books printed before Joe Miller grew old enough to smile; adventures of Nellie the Plumber's Daughter, of Ignatz the Frankfurter King; the merry jests of Hezekiah Frazzleface,—and several hundred other heart-achers are all to be read and carefully registered before being laid in the trays for return.

At frequent intervals the office boy brings in more packets for perusal.

The scripts are nearly always accompanied by personal notes, which if read would consume hours of a busy day. Threats of damage suits if any of their ideas should be stolen; complaints from geniuses who have forgotten to put names and addresses upon their writings; manuscripts in pencil, on tissue paper, in red, blue and green ink, with invisible type-writing,—all these conspire to make life more of a burden for the Editor as the hours go on.

Directors drift in, with plaintive demands for good live plays to start upon.

The owner visits, to relieve his mind of sarcastic criticism on the dramatic excellences of recent releases—notable for the absence of that quality known as “story.”

The Editor sighs and perhaps relieves his temperament with a gentle oath.

When all seems lost, he espies in a neat envelope, with stamped and self-addressed envelope for return, a manuscript unchaperoned by an epistolary autobiography.

The manuscript is neatly typewritten, on heavy white paper.

The Editor breathes hard: hope springs eternal, even in a Scenario Editor's breast.

He studies it carefully. The title page gives the name of the photoplay, with the author's name and address in the upper left hand corner. Turning the page he beholds a well written scenario synopsis of about three hundred words. It is legible: it is interesting; the theme is virile: the action is probable, possible and appealing.

On the following page he finds a cast of characters giving the age, a brief description of each important person, embodied in a few words, and from this he can estimate part of the cost of the production; for cost is a most important factor.

Under the cast of characters is a list of all the exteriors and interiors required for complete setting of the piece. This determines the remainder of expense. It is in the province of the Scenario Editor, as well as the owner, to look out for the penny and the hundred dollar bill. The director gen-

erally works at cross purposes, but that has nothing to do with our little tale.

Following the cast, on the succeeding sheets of manuscript the Editor is overjoyed to behold the complete scenario form worked out for every large and small scene; not wordy literary flights but vital flashes of description of the exact action or "business," as it is termed in the profession.

Needless to say, a scenario like this is an oasis in the desert of undesirable manuscripts. The Editor places it aside for presentation to the directors, if indeed he does not hunt up one of them immediately with his happy find. Even though the plot and action are not as good as some of those poorly written, the impression is so favorable that the best points of the manuscript are brought out forcibly.

The average scenario editor is on the lookout for good material and with his superior skill and experience in the needs of the companies he is very apt to aid in one way or another the cause of the writer, by suggested additions or perhaps even a rewriting so as to utilize the good points of the photoplay.

Granting that the scenario meets the approval of the editor and the director or directors who determine the purchase of a

scenario, the manuscript after being carefully supervised, is handed to the producer for staging.

The script may not be used for many weeks or it may be put on within a few hours of its acceptance. Indeed, the latter is more apt to be the case because of the dearth of good stories and the steady output of the companies.

The great bugaboo of the motion picture producers is being behind schedule. Almost invariably they are forced to rush their plays. The sooner a good scenario comes to hand the quicker its completion with satisfaction to the head of the company and the release department.

There is much preparation necessary after the acceptance of a scenario.

The director carefully studies the photoplay in its theme, its romance, the photographic possibilities of the story, and makes a general embellishment of the action as described by the author.

Many directors rewrite each scene for their own use, covering every detail of characters, costumes, properties "in hand" and properties "in set"; a list of indoor settings is given to the stage manager and arrange-

ments are made for the production of the play.

Weather conditions count very frequently in the preparation for this work. If the weather is clear and bright, the director generally begins with the outside work.

The large studios, in some instances, have "location men," whose specialty is to seek locations for exterior dramatic work. They even go so far as to collect photographs for their files, showing churches, cottages, rustic bridges, tenements, factories, brooks, cliffs, mountain scenes and the like so that on short notice the director can designate the locations for his work. This is not the usual custom, however. In most instances, the director uses his own general knowledge of locality for hunting the scenes, transporting in automobiles direct from the studio the characters needed in particular outdoor scenes with the camera man, and an assistant. The actors are costumed and "made up" in their own dressing rooms in order to be prepared for quick work.

Within a short radius of New York City, there is a remarkable diversity of scenery and the companies of the metropolis are very fortunate for this reason. Their mountain pictures are usually taken on the heights of

the Palisades, on either side of the Hudson River, and for rustic country scenes, they find ample variety within thirty minutes' automobile ride of Broadway, on the Jersey Shore, on Long Island and in Westchester County, while the city proper offers an infinitude of picturesque backgrounds which will fit places of almost any national locality,—Little Italy, the Ghetto, quaint Greenwich village, the wharves, the docks, Italian Gardens, French Boulevards and parks, the squalid factories,—all a few short blocks from the Great White Way, all rendering invaluable aid to the director.

When the "caravan" of actors, actresses, the camera man and the director arrive at the location selected, it is necessary for the director to secure permission for the taking of pictures.

This is not always an easy task. Perhaps a janitor, a caretaker or the owner objects to the immortalization of his property. But in most cases judicious application of soothing syrup of argent makes this agreeable. Locations cost from three dollars to fifty or a hundred, depending upon the importance of the scene and the trouble incurred. For feature pictures trains and railroad yards are often hired, where the price runs up in the



hundreds. Trolley cars, trucks, vans, workmen in trenches, the laborers in gigantic building operations, employees in machine shops,—all these are brought into the settings when necessary to realize the “atmosphere” which will allow the principal actors to fulfill their dramatic rôles.

When the out-door location has been secured, the camera is set up on its tripod, and the camera man, under directions from his superior, proceeds to focus on the necessary points. Chalk lines are drawn, indicating the field of the lens. This field must be used for the action, and here is one of the greatest problems of motion picture production.

Here must be noted an unique feature of cinematographic drama. The stage of the theatre is fan-shaped, with the curve of the fan—the apron or front of the stage, under the proscenium arch—as the place for leading action. The entire space across the stage, directly in front of the orchestra, can be used, and thus the actors have great latitude.

It is exactly the reverse with the cinematographic camera. Its field is fan-shaped, but the eye of the camera is at the small end of the fan. The most important business must be performed as closely as possible to this



fan-point, in order that the images may appear large and distinctly upon the film. Thus, the audience beholds upon the screen of the theatre the dramatic action, the facial expression and the subtlety of gesture which are so necessary to take the place of dialogue.

The development of the "close-up" action, whereby the figures are sometimes so large as to show only heads and torsos is an American innovation, although we owe the earlier methods of photoplay pantomime to the French and Italian producers.

When action is carried on at a distance from the camera it is diminished greatly in dramatic value, for the lens exaggerates perspective.

To work in the few feet allotted,—amounting to a stage width of six or eight feet, at a distance of ten feet from the lens,—is a tremendous problem many times.

The director is compelled to rehearse, again and again, the movements of the actors in order to keep them within the field of vision, and at the same time to utilize each movement without showing unnatural closeness.

In one production the director was compelled to build a small fence around the feet

of an actor who persistently stepped out of the picture in a crucial dramatic moment. The figure of the man was cut at the knees, and the fence was not evident—yet it saved the day!

Limited by this necessity, the drawing of lines and the careful work inside them is of vital import. For exterior work it is especially difficult, while another worrisome feature in street scenes is the prevention of pedestrians and the ubiquitous urchin from dashing through the picture at the psychological moment.

Few flashes are run for less than five feet. These small views are necessary to make the action continuous throughout the play.

By this is meant the amount of space in the reel given to the action necessary to make the story consecutive. In other words, a strong dramatic scene filled with important business is apt to run to seventy-five or one hundred feet, practically one-tenth of the length of a reel. "Flashes" of the hero riding desperately on horseback, a telephone message, the entrance or exit through a portal, will take only eight or ten feet of film.

Here is one of the greatest difficulties of a photoplaywright—to avoid breaks in the plot and to condense the movement of the

story so skillfully that every step is evident without expending too much space on the connecting links.

To return to our outdoor rehearsal, when the director feels that the characters can interpret every move and expression to his satisfaction, the camera man turns the crank and the scene is filmed. This may have to be repeated three or four times in order to hold it within the desired footage limit or to catch some difficult business correctly.

The director proceeds with his company to the next location and endeavors to complete, as far as possible, all the outdoor pictures during good weather, for the sun light or bright cloudy days are essential for exterior work.

In the studio, the pictures are taken in practically the same manner. The stage is set with scrupulous attention to detail, the properties are all arranged and, in cinematographic drama, real food, real wine, real pictures on the walls and real ornaments must be obtained instead of imitations which are used on the stage, because the audience of a theatre has not the bitter keenness of perception possessed by the motion camera lens.

All the scenes which are to be put on in one set are produced before it is removed.

The chalk lines are placed upon the floor of the studio just as was done in the exterior work.

There are many daylight studios, but it has been found advisable, for avoiding expensive delays, to use powerful batteries of electric lights, suspended over the stage and arranged in rows on either side of the acting space. By this means weather conditions do not interfere with the program of production. When all the action in one set is completed, it is "struck" by the stage hands and another scene is erected.

The entire list of sets is gone through with in this manner, not at all in sequence of the script, but according to the discretion of the director.

When all the scenes have been photographed, the rolls of films are sent to the laboratory, where the negative or master film is developed.

This is separated and joined in the order indicated by the scenario arrangement and from this is made the first print or positive, by printing the picture upon fresh film, as a photographer prints upon paper from his glass plates.

Every studio is equipped with a miniature theatre, called the projecting room, and

thither the director and his assistant hie themselves to see the "first run" of the print.

This is generally a harrowing experience, because the entire reel seems helter-skelter when two or three views have been taken of the same scene and all run in with the first print. The director chooses the best selections from this, makes notes for needed eliminations, and it is put in perfected form, in the assembling room, by skillful girl operatives.

It may be necessary in some instances to make "re-takes" of some of the scenes, owing to mistakes or technical needs. If this is the case, the actors are reassembled, the scenes repeated, interior or exterior, and the new film substituted in place of the rejected portion.

When the print is finally approved, it is again assembled, the waste portions of the film are clipped out and it is run once more in the projecting room, this time nearer the idea of the director. A print is frequently run twenty times, after as many "surgical operations" before finally approved.

It is certainly a terrific task to reduce a film to the exact number of feet for a reel, but, however heartrending it is for a director to cut into some of his best scenes, it is nec-

essary to do this, because the commercial demands make the unit one, two or three thousand feet, as the case may be.

After a director has seen the play shown on the screen, he then prepares his title list. The main title of the picture, with the name of the company making it, is generally given ten feet, and the remaining sub-titles or "leaders," indicating action, reproductions of letters, telegrams, photographs, etc., are treated very carefully to fit the needs of the picture as finally produced.

For this reason, no matter how carefully an author words his titles in his script, they seldom answer the purpose needed because inevitable alterations in the course of production make it necessary for the director to prune and slice his titles to fit his own needs.

Pictures which require many titles are weak, because the story that depends upon explanatory printing is difficult to follow, and it should be vital and unified in its action through the *tableaux vivantes*.

In titles, the amount of space given is generally a foot to a word. Hence, two hundred words of titles—it is easy to figure out how little that is in the course of a thirty or forty scene picture—takes up two hundred feet of

film, or deprives the play of one-fifth of its entire action.

Upon the completion of the first print to the director's satisfaction, it is sent to the assembly room again. Here the girls match the positive as corrected with the exact pieces of negatives from which it was made, carefully joining strip after strip to follow the exact sequence of the film pictures.

This negative is sent to the factory and from it are made the regular prints, which are wound on the reels and distributed to the public for exhibition.

This distribution in the system of regular releases, used in America, is done through syndicates of manufacturers. From the central office of these syndicates the pictures are sent out to the various exchanges throughout the country and upon regular orders. The exchanges rent the films to the exhibitors or picture theatre proprietors in a special territory which is allotted to them.

Most of the photoplays are shown one day only in each theatre. The newer the pictures are, the higher price for the rental. Pictures known as "first releases" are those shown on the day picked out by the companies for the first public exhibition of the photoplay. It is the same throughout the



country. After being shown in one house, the picture is either collected by the agent of the exchange to be sent direct to another theatre or forwarded by one exhibitor to the next neighbor on the circuit. In this way it goes through the chain of theatres using mutual exchange service, taking the place of the old one-night-stand theatrical companies.

The life of a film is generally a year and a half or two years, although it becomes the so-called "commercial film" after the first year. It is used to fill in programmes and retained on the shelves of the exchange for emergency.

Ninety days after the date of release, it is customary among most of the American companies to ship the negatives to London, where duplicates are made and copies are sold in the open market to the buyers from every country in the world, who flock to the English capital to make their purchases. The titles are translated and printed into the languages of the various countries in which the pictures are to be exhibited. Thus the American writer sends his thoughts and dramatic creations throughout the entire world.

It has been worked out by statisticians that a photoplay, with a reasonably good sale of



thirty reels, is seen in the course of a year by more than sixteen million people. Hence the photoplaywright has a greater audience with one picture than Shakespeare had in two centuries.

The photoplays are advertised in the magazines of the moving picture trade, the synopses are printed in the reading columns, as well as being featured in display advertisements in the periodicals.

Although each of the four large syndicates is composed of many component companies, their work runs smoothly and the syndicates, for the most part, advertise collectively the brand which they distribute.

Besides the syndicates, however, there are at present a number of feature companies working exclusively on the production of large spectacular plays of three and four reel length. These productions are generally accepted for longer periods than single reels and are run in the large theatres for periods lasting from a week to six months.

The scenario work of these productions is almost invariably perfected by specialists engaged by the companies. It is a waste of time for the average playwright to prepare great historical plays, pageants and expen-

sive multiple-reel productions. He is much better rewarded by devoting his energies at the beginning of his career by the production of modern American plays with simple casts, powerful action and themes of every-day life.

These are readily accepted and devoutly prayed for by the editors and directors. When a writer has created fifteen or twenty successful photoplays, the eyes of producers will be upon him and he is then in line for promotion to special work on the larger subjects.

One of the best ways for a writer to keep in touch with the possibilities of the market is to follow very closely the press announcements and the advertisements of the leading periodicals devoted to this subject. Magazines devoted to the art of the writing of scenarios are good for suggestions and tips to new openings.

Among these are the "Writer's Magazine," the "Photoplaywright" and the "Editor," which are all conscientiously and skillfully devoted to the interests of writers.

The strictly trade magazines afford definite knowledge, week by week, of the needs and plans of the companies. They

are published for producers and exhibitors, but are invaluable to the writer who analyzes situations and keeps abreast of the times by making the same careful study of operations that a good salesman does in any particular commercial field.

Indeed, real art is never complete unless it is commercially successful: Shakespeare, Stevenson, Balzac, Dickens, Thackeray, and practically all of the great writers and dramatists, crystallized the best in their own times by writing that which would sell, and in this way attained success.

Art which is not valuable to the public for which it is produced is seldom permanent. So, the photoplays which are not written to answer definite needs along the lines of conventional requirements, represent wasted energy and accomplish nothing for the improvement of the cinematographic work nor benefit to the author.

When the photoplaywright establishes a system of shrewd, systematic and persevering salesmanship, applying to his productions the best technique, the highest artistry of which he is capable, his success is eventually assured.

The "Moving Picture World," the "New York Sunday Telegraph," "The Billboard,"

"Motography," the "New York Dramatic Mirror," the "Exhibitors' Times-News"—all these publications are strictly professional. Too much attention cannot be paid to their columns and display sections.

In particular, the "Moving Picture World" contains many interesting articles by well-known critics on photoplay technique, as well as showing brief synopses of the weekly releases of all the important companies in the field.

No wise writer will waste time with the get-rich-quick correspondence schools on photoplay technique. The scenarios of their patrons are subjected to form-letter methods. The recent jailing of the promoter of one of these concerns for fraudulent use of the mails, by which he is estimated to have cleared thirty thousand dollars in two years from his victims, should be ample warning.

A book which will give a broad technical knowledge of dramatic construction can be recommended to writers who are earnestly working for the highest rewards in this field. This volume is "The Analysis of Play Construction and Dramatic Principle," by W. T. Price, which is a profound and sincere exposition by a philosopher of the art who

has read and accepted for various managers more plays in the last twenty-five years than any one else in America.

The advertisements of the quack correspondence schools announce that "no literary training nor skill in writing is necessary for success in photoplay work." They declare that "the idea is all that is necessary." This is false. There are millions of ideas: every scenario editor, director and actor is presented with scores of clever suggestions from his friends. The magazines and newspapers teem daily with incidents which would be the basis for good scenarios, but it is the careful dramatic development, professional presentation of theme and movement, which makes a scenario worth while. The "real" money to be made in this kind of work is by scripts of professional excellence, for the day is past when companies pay five, ten and twenty-five dollars for fragmentary ideas, or simple narrations of incidents.

"Fine writing," i. e., oratorical and poetic profuseness of language, are not required. In fact, they militate against a scenario by creating a bored attitude with the reader. But good, concise English, with description of action which conveys the exact requirements, are necessary for successful work.

Verbosity is to be avoided. But it is most advisable to have the synopsis, the descriptive passages, and the business expressed in complete, parsable sentences which indicate clear and constructive thought behind them.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE THEME OF THE PHOToplay.

**T**HE theme is the backbone which gives strength, action and effectiveness to the photoplay, just as with a drama for the stage or a novel.

Despite the importance of cleverness in presentation of the ideas, the ideas themselves are what really lend vitality and worth to a story. Because of this importance the motion picture companies are compelled to utilize the works of varied writers, with differentiated aspects on life, and manifold dissimilarities of personality.

This need of strong themes is the great boon for the ambitious writer who is not directly connected with the producing companies, but writes from a different environment.

His thoughts are apt to be fresher, and while perhaps lacking the technical skill of the scenario staff writer, he views life from a less professional vantage point. He is

closer to the people, and is the center of his own individual web of observation lines; he beholds romances and episodes absolutely unknown to others in his same line of work. And when he applies these personal experiences and observations to dramatic depiction, whether in the form of photoplays or four act dramas for the stage, he is armed with power and splendid ammunition.

To apply these vigorous and unhackneyed thoughts so as to produce artistic results along the lines laid down by centuries of necessary conventions, is the simple and complex art of dramatic technique.

Nothing in art, as well as in business, can succeed without a deep and definite purpose.

That purpose must, to endure permanently, be good, make the world better for its existence, and arrive at a definite moral conclusion. Yet the morality or the purpose or theme of a photoplay must be adroitly exploited; for nothing is so vapid and tiresome as the type of play which is a dramatization of be-good-and-you-will-be-happy. The French novelists and dramatists lean to this sort of thing—at the end of the fifth act, but during the preceding numbers they have so stirred up the Decalogue and the Serpent that the audience accepts the virtuous finale



as a sort of soothing syrup, to calm their over-stimulated temperaments.

The photoplaywright should make it a point to keep in touch with the different moving picture periodicals. Not those which publish fictionized narratives of the plays, but the trade magazines which are published for the benefit of the manufacturers and exhibitors.

Through the columns of these magazines and careful reading of the advertisements of the productions of the different companies for a period of several weeks, the writer can keep the general field well in mind and master the understanding of the demands of the public more directly than through any of the so-called schools or even through the direct instruction of any one person.

Lengthy letters to the editor are a bore and actually prejudice him against the manuscript. The proof of the scenario is the scenario itself and it is even a waste of time to include any letter, for the carefully written manuscript giving the title, name and address of the writer and enclosing a stamped envelope and self-addressed envelope explains itself.

Above all things avoid coincidences. Coincidence is the make-shift of a writer who

cannot make the characters of his plot work out the story.

Avoid all actions or characterizations which are not definitely needed in the removing of obstacles to the completion of the story or else which are not absolutely necessary to show the character and purpose of the important characters.

Put one plot at a time; the single reel picture, lasts only eighteen minutes and only one line of action can be worked out well in this time. This is another important detail in which the photoplay differs from the drama.

The title is very important. It is safe to say that two-thirds of the scenarios have been bought because of a clever and salient title.

The best title is one which is so expressive of the theme that it almost gives the entire story in a word or two or three.

Yet, the title should not tell the denouement of the story, but leave that as the bait which attracts the spectator to the theatre. It is bad to send a scenario without a thoughtfully devised title, because the editor naturally concludes that the author who cannot plan a good title cannot have a complete grasp of his theme.

The editor or the director frequently changes the title and the subtitles to fit certain demands of the play as produced, but they should be carefully elaborated in advance.

Real dramatic construction is the art of selecting the vital incidents of a story, chopping away the unnecessary parts, condensing and making more tense the essentials and arranging them so that they will have coherence, swift and certain movement, a stirring climax whether of comedy, romance or tragedy with a justified and satisfactory finale.

For the collection of new material the author has a world of resources.

Every newspaper contains some new complication of human drama or comedy in its hundreds of items.

Themes can be developed from the most suggestive and appealing of these. They must be transformed from the mere story into a dramatic structure; with a definite line or thread of story, and the imagination of the writer must devise new situations, additional characters and consecutive incidents, which all unite to reach a definite and unavoidable denouement.

The theme itself can be expressed in one

sentence, no matter how involved or dramatic the plot.

Thus, the theme of "Love Incog," the sample comedy shown in this book, is: "A temporarily bankrupt young man masquerades as a girl, while his sweetheart dresses as a man, to go to a dance, whence they elope and are married in the wrong clothes, to outwit the sheriff and a fortune-hunting count."

The theme of "The Chap from Broadway" is: "A New Yorker goes to the mountain country to buy timber, where he wins a landowner's daughter by outwitting her old sweetheart, the leader of a moonshine gang."

When a theme can not be expressed in this manner it is hopelessly lacking in directness and will not succeed.

Every scenario should first be expressed in this way, with the later divertissements introduced to carry it along, by an audience's interest, maintaining that interest with suspense and sympathy, and making it "real life" by character depiction and action which "rings true," until the end of the play satisfies the demands of poetic and dramatic justice—and the audience.

Much sarcasm has been vented by certain

critics upon novelists and dramatists who end their stories "nicely." But, the answer is simple: there is so much unpunished wickedness and undeserved misery about us every day, that it is stimulating and beneficial to see virtue rewarded, if only in the make-believe!

One thing certain is that audiences do not relish the bitter ending as they do the sweet; there are, of course, themes in which death is the only logical termination of a character's career. But, in each instance, the purpose of such treatment should be definitely to show justice and to teach goodness and happiness.

The writer of this book believes that the title of a photoplay, with the connotation of ideas which it brings up, is the first and most important step in its preparation.

With a distinctive and original title, it is almost certain that the chain of thought will proceed with clearness, force and artistic finish, provided that the basic rules of scenario construction are followed.

A very good way to tabulate new material is to keep a note book, in which are to be written hundreds of interesting titles and suggestive themes.

They may not all be used for months, but

the inspiration which is necessary for consummation is stimulated by continual study of these titles, themes and even characters which may be jotted down.

The ideal photoplay title is that which resembles a book name—short, hinting at much and yet concealing more, strong in phrase and appealing to sentiment.

Old plays, novels and even short stories are rich treasure houses for photoplay suggestion; there is no absolutely original combination of dramatic elements proper.

There are said to be twelve original stories. But just as there are only twelve different notes of music, and twenty-six letters, the same multiplicity of application used by composers and lexicographers can be utilized in different combinations of ancient themes, combined with every-day incidents and characters familiar to the writer.

The great branches of subject matter which can be worked upon are all based upon Love: (1) love of another—either filial, parental, friendly, fraternal or sexual; (2) love of country; (3) love of wealth; (4) love of power; (5) love of learning and of religion.

What an infinite opportunity for variation!

When characters appear in the beginning

of a play they should be brought back again, in logical manner, to participate in the closing action, as much as possible. This strengthens their value, and at the same time clears up all queries in the minds of the spectators.

The closer the action is twined about a few characters, the less difficult it is to do this.

The fewer characters to be woven into the action, the more dramatic work for each character.

The ideal photoplay would be one with three characters alone: for here the work of the actors would shine at its best and hold the undivided attention of the observers.

At the same time more attention could be given by the director to the production; more time taken, because less wasted on supernumeraries, and more money to spend on settings and costumes and additional film, because of the reduced cost of salaries.

But three-character plays are the most difficult to make successful.

Audiences like to see beautiful landscapes and interiors, while a well-chosen variety of pleasing or picturesque characters makes up for lesser deficiencies in plot.

Where historical subjects are treated, the



writer should adhere as closely as possible to the actual facts of history, interpolating whatever romance or tragedy is original in such a way as not to conflict with the records.

Involved costume plays, demanding a large number of characters and scenes, are a waste of effort, except upon special order from a producing company.

Plays in which houses must be burned or blown up, trains wrecked, fire engines used, storms depicted, and other truly dramatic but very difficult accessories used, should be avoided by the writer. They are by the companies, except on special features. It should be remembered that not more than twenty people in toto are used for the majority of reels.

The dramatization of popular novels and successful plays can be done only with special permission from the authors or owners of the copyrights. The companies generally make these arrangements themselves and employ special writers to make the scenarios.

The question of Censorship is an important one to the author as well as to the companies: for photoplays which will not pass the gauntlet of the protective committees in various cities are tabooed by produc-



ers, because they mean a waste of film and effort.

The subjects under the embargo can be briefly epitomized. They are well dispensed with for photoplays, considering the influence which the picture themes have upon millions of young people and susceptible elders.

Education is a movement—it can either go forward or backward, and there is no standing still.

Picture plays which do not educate for the good, have an evil tendency.

Wanton slaughter and revolting cruelty should not be shown.

Murder by bullet, bludgeon or knife should not be put upon the screen—it may be hinted at, if necessary for the strength of the story, but should not be committed in view of the spectators.

Poison and its use should be kept out of any play: it is too apt to suggest deviltry to weak minds or vicious. Indeed, all methods of burglary, robbery by tricks, forging, counterfeiting, should be tabooed, for this is criminal education when shown in detail.

Suicide should never be presented in a scenario, as showing the actual deed—for the same reason, evil suggestion.

Immoral flippancy, suggestive scenes and repulsive and degenerate characters should be eliminated. The sex line is a dangerous one to approach in photoplays. Subjects which would be artistic and moral in stage drama and novel form, accompanied by splendid lines and presented in problem play form, can not be given their reformatory value in wordless plays. They should be avoided sedulously.

Romance, history, and nearly every dramatic theme is based upon sex in one way or another, but the wise photoplaywright refrains from encroaching upon any intimate topics which would cause affront to the thousands of worthy and even prudish people throughout the country whose money pays for the picture plays.

Religious subjects which emphasize the advantages of one religion over another are "impossible"; subjects from Bible stories must be handled most delicately as well, because of the prejudices of many conflicting creeds.

## CHAPTER III.

### DRAMATIC PRINCIPLE.

**T**HE keynote of all dramatic construction (a truth which cannot be too strongly emphasized) is **STRUGGLE**. Remember this whether you are writing comedy, drama, tragedy or romance. In comedy the person struggles against a ludicrous or embarrassing situation in an endeavor to win happiness in the end. Comedy is a struggle with amusing circumstances.

The same impulse prevails in drama where the hero or heroine struggles against wickedness, jealousy or something like that.

Besides this, there is the dramatic "triad" necessary for every play. There must be three elements. There must be two women and a man, two men and a woman, or a man, a woman and some emotion or feeling which influences their complete happiness.

The first essential of a dramatic presentation is to show who the leading characters are to let the audience know what the "strug-

gle" is and to indicate the direction which that action will take.

The first scene of a scenario should strike this keynote. The following scenes should be logical developments of the primary action in a direct and unflinching progress.

The leading character or characters should be shown in practically every scene of the play except where it is necessary to explain by digression, the development of some action in which they will be later implicated.

For example: the hero or heroine should be shown at the beginning of a drama or comedy. Then it is perhaps advisable to jump to the scene of some conspiracy or preparation of some future action which in the next scene will be brought into relation with the leading characters.

Breaks in the action are as bad on the screen as a stage-wait on the stage. If possible, it is best to show perfect sequence without the aid of geographical jumps or drops in time, such as "Three Weeks Later," "Five Years Afterwards" and such subterfuges.

According to the classic drama, the principal characters are the hero or male lead, the heroine or female lead, the juvenile or young man who is generally the friend of

the hero or the comedian, the ingenue or young woman who plays lighter parts than the heroine, the male heavy known in melodrama as the villain, the female heavy characterized as the adventuress, the low male and low female heavies generally of the lower social scale who do the "dirty work," the first old man who may be the father of one of the characters, the second old man who plays lighter rôles, the first old woman who may be the mother of one of the characters of vital importance, and the second old woman, who may possibly be the nurse or kindly neighbor.

It is easy to analyze any drama, comedy or photoplay production to observe how definitely this arrangement of characters is followed in all dramatic construction.

Another requisite of the classic drama is the so-called "Greek unity of time, place and action." By adherence to this, the development of a dramatic incident follows fluently, within close range of action and with irresistible power upon the imagination of the audience.

When the action is divided into periods of time, six months, ten years or a century apart, there is an unavoidable break in the sequence of the observer's thought. The

power of well-portrayed characters is naturally weakened because of the changes of time upon the characters themselves which make it necessary for a re-establishment of identities. The ideal period of time for dramatic action should be that actually required for the presentation of the business.

Stage time is generally twice as rapid as that of actual life. In other words, the development of action is so intense that what would take half an hour in action in real life, can be expressed in fifteen minutes in the drama without the audience realizing its condensation. The absence of dialogue in the silent drama aids this rapidity of presentation.

The unity of place is desirable because repeated changes of costume, additional extraneous characters and the time jumps required to get from one end of the country to another in the space of a few seconds do not bother the producer nor interfere with the artistic effect of the photoplay.

Unity of place is also of economical importance for the production and will permit the use of the same settings for many scenes. In this way the producer feels justified in spending more money upon the settings themselves. He is more or less limited by

the owner of the motion picture company as to the outlay for each picture—and the result is more elaborate and artistic stage effects.

Unity of action, which means continued, direct and unceasingly forceful business in every scene is the prime essential of every photoplay.

No character should be introduced who does not add his definite share towards the denouement of the play. It is not necessary to introduce action simply in order to show the nature of a character: if the theme is strong and the purpose clear, each character will show this nature anyway.

It is the business of the director to indicate by the make-up, the costume and the subtleties of pantomime, the nature of the characters.

The “rising action” follows the introduction, showing the development of the situation. Then the series of powerful incidents finally culminate in what is called the climax.

On the stage this is generally at the end of the next to the last act. It is the *big* thing of the play. All the influences of the leads and the heavies culminate in this climax. It is the final great struggle before the “falling action” which shows the result

of the activities of the characters, in the denouement, which is the last step in your action.

In this latter all the ravelled skeins of dramatic activity (and there should not be too many in an eighteen minute performance), are pulled together and woven so as to make a complete fabric of the play.

It should be remembered that "want," whether it be wanting the love of a woman, of a man, of power, of money or of food, is the steam of the dramatic engine. The fight to satisfy this "want" is the movement of the engine through the play. The denouement is the satisfaction or deprivation of this desire which must be in the nature of dramatic and artistic justice.

The play must essentially be moral in its theme.

If the "want" is immoral—the greed for gold or the satisfaction of an unworthy love or some other wicked design,—the ending of the play must be the logical punishment for those efforts and the victory of good over evil.

If the want is noble, it should be a happy reward, but in all cases, the attainment of good desires or the penalty of bad ones must be brought about through the efforts of the



characters themselves and not through any chance happenings or obvious luck, written to order for the play by the author.

The first scene being the key-note of the photoplay, it should begin with "ginger" and should be in the midst of activity, introducing as many of the leading characters as possible.

To have the characters enter into a room or an exterior is a waste of film. Unless for some valid reason it is desirable to show this action, this extra time should be omitted.

As often as possible, the characters should be "discovered" in the scene when it begins for in many cases the entrance "eats up" many valuable feet of film. In some cases, it may require thirty or forty feet of film to "enter" the photographic field; this is generally a waste of space which is needed for more important action in other parts of the film.

The director chooses locations, but suggested settings, in detail, frequently lend valuable aid to the artistic effect.

It is a good thing, in fact, to describe the exact types of characters and special "properties" which the author pictures in his mind, but the play should not depend upon any particular setting or particular character for

production. Neither should the play be written for certain actors and actresses (favorites of the writer) because it may fall short of a company's requirements or the possibilities in their casts. Thus would the idea be handicapped for other sales.

The complexities of the action should be caused by the natural unwinding of the plot, by the workings of the characters in the play and follow along lines which they would be expected to pursue. If the character is a truck-driver, he cannot be expected to act like a bank president. If another is a country girl or a peasant, it is unreasonable to suppose that she will work out her problems with all the adroitness and subtle skill of a woman of the world.

Above all the reward, or conquest of evil which brings that reward, must be so evident that nothing is left to the imagination of the spectator, nor must it go by chance. It should be shown definitely that the hero or heroine have worked, fought, and suffered in order to attain success. Anything short of this is poor dramatic construction.

These precepts are simple and yet they apply to the best drama and literature of all peoples. They were as true in the time of Shakespeare as they are now. For this rea-

son they can be applied with more striking effect to the environment with which a writer is familiar and which will strike home the closest to the people who will see the play.

Modern themes, modern characters, modern problems of every day life with the multiplicity of environment of the present times, gives to the imaginative writer a field of inspiration and activity which can never be drained dry of dramatic material.

Sentiment is the oil which greases the machinery which makes the world go round. Human interest, in other words, heart interest, is necessary for the complete dramatic production, no matter what is the nature or setting. The appeal should always be made to the sympathies of the audience in order that the efforts of the hero or heroine are justifiable. Sympathy is absolutely necessary to make the leading character vital and to hold the interest and suspense of the audience throughout the play.

It is not necessary to make a man a "prig" nor a girl a "prude." Make them worth while. The leads should be appealingly human. It is not necessary to tag the moral on to the play. It should be self-evident through the series of incidents which prove the qualities of the characters involved.

With comedy as in drama the action is that of struggle and that comedy is most successful which is imbued with the spirit of satire, of some foible, vanity or moral or mental attitude which deserves reproof.

The reader upon reflection will observe that the just ridicule of unreasoning egotism, braggadocio, selfishness, avarice, cruelty, extravagance or cowardice are the themes upon which the importance of comedies or dramas are based.

Farce is comedy which is amusing from its quaint and intricate development of tangled situations rather than character drawing which is the basis of comedy.

The demands in motion picture companies to-day are for quaint, jolly comedies in which can be shown the faces of pretty girls, charming costumes and attractive landscape settings as well as artistic interiors.

The love element should prevail but it is unnecessary, even inadvisable to have especially disagreeable characters in these plays of lighter vein. It has been said that "All the world loves a lover except good luck and his future mother-in-law." There are many other obstacles besides these which may interfere with the course of romance and the achievement of sentimental aspirations.

By skilled depiction of discouragements, and interferences of a thousand kinds, presented in a continued series of struggles against them, a clever writer can produce first-rate comedies with a spark of originality and uniqueness which should keep the wolf from the dumbwaiter for several years to come. The basis of comedy is "making fun" of some character—and letting that fun act as the central purpose of the play.

The themes to be avoided are those of sensuality, degraded phases of life, moral degradation and topics which are apt to offend people of certain races, religious or political differences.

Try this acid test on every scenario:

- (1). Is it plausible?
- (2). Is it probable?
- (3). Will it pass the Board of Censorship?
- (4). Is it possible to produce it at reasonable expense, regarding scenery and characters?
- (5). Is it a simple theme, arising from a natural beginning to a natural dramatic ending without too many furbelows?
- (6). Does it possess individuality, differing absolutely in some important respect from anything you ever read, saw or heard?

After the writer has succeeded with a number of single reel scenarios it is time (and then only) to direct his energies to the multiple reel subjects. Two reel comedies and dramas are profitable productions for the motion picture companies because the additional expense seldom amounts to more than fifty per cent. of the cost of a single reel, with double returns from the sales. Yet the two reel subject should be doubly powerful in dramatic value to justify the purchase of the script, at an additional cost.

The vogue for half-reel subjects, by which two playlets or one play and one educational subject are shown on the same reel, is past. It requires no more work for the writer, or in truth the producer, to produce a full reel of good selling power.

The technical presentation of a two or three reel subject is virtually the same as that of a single reel, except that there should be a proportionate addition to the number of scenes, and dramatic crises.

As to prices paid for scripts, this varies as it does in the magazines and book publishing field, with the value of the work and the fame of a writer.

Fifteen dollars should be the lowest price accepted by even a beginner for a script: if

it is not worth that to a company, it is entirely valueless.

Twenty-five dollars is a fair price, however, for an unknown writer, and is generally the lowest offer made. The companies pay on acceptance, sending a release voucher for the author to sign, either with the check, or directly on acceptance, with the check to follow the return of the voucher, in which the author certifies that the story is original.

Scenarios can not be satisfactorily copyrighted, despite the claims of certain advertising lawyers, for the scenario is merely the description of a series of actions. Words, phrases, pictures (as records of action) may be copyrighted by application to the Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. But a dishonest scenario editor can take the theme of a picture play, alter it slightly and claim it as his own. This is the "profit and loss" column of the writer—it is the gambling chance which he is forced to take in sending his manuscripts for consideration.

But in nearly all the companies scrupulous honesty is observed. It is the best business policy, for it is better to pay for the work of a clever writer, to encourage him to offer more material, than to pirate his work, and



make an enemy of him when the theft is discovered. For the protection of his own interests a writer should accordingly follow the synopsis publications, in the columns of the trade magazines, to see that he has not been tricked. He should remember, however, that themes identical with his own can innocently enough be presented by other writers, and accepted in good faith. It is only when the synopsis or some peculiarly clever titles or both are purveyed that he can claim plagiarism.

The simplest method of protection against plagiarism of this sort is to keep carbon copies of every scenario written, with the date of offering to various companies, carefully filed. When an apparent theft of his work is observed in some advertised play, he is entitled to demand the source of authorship from the company producing it. If he is dissatisfied with the reply it is then time to take legal action. If plagiarism can be proved, by testimony which establishes his own authorship and similarities which are more than coincidences, it is not a hard task to secure damages or a settlement out of court which will repay many times the original price of his scenario.

Accusations of literary theft should be



charily made, however, and only after a writer has made certain of his case. The burden of proof is upon him, and it is not so easy to prove sole ownership of a dramatic composition.

Writers who are experienced and successful in scenario production are paid much better prices than the amateurs; seventy-five and one hundred dollars are not too much for a scenario which will net to the company a profit of thousands of dollars.

The future of scenario writing is brighter than the past. The old themes have been worn threadbare: the mechanics of direction have become so much more strenuous that the producer has no time to write his own plays, and here is the golden opportunity for an author who devotes time and scientific methods to the development of his art.

The commercial field of motion picture plays is changing—each month sees a surprising development. Whereas a few years ago only one syndicate controlled the entire American field, there are now four important factions, while the so-called “open market” is extending.

Time was when theatre proprietors were forced to accept whatever pictures were doled out to them by the exchanges. The ex-

changes in turn took what they could get, and the monopolistic syndicate took the "melon." The public was allowed to pay.

But, owing to the activities of the "independents," who formed new companies, fought the battle of distribution, and battered down the wall of the monopoly, it is now possible for the theatre proprietor to demand certain pictures from his exchange. He is educated to its desirability by direct advertising from the manufacturers, and his patrons who follow the announcements of the companies to a surprising extent, back him up in his policy. The exchanges are independent enough to purchase features from other than their syndicate producers.

It has developed into survival of the fittest: when that is carried down to the foundation, we see that the profits of the companies depend upon the demand, and the demand depends upon the steady and improving quality of their photoplays. So, the opportunity of the writer is preeminent: as Shakespeare says, "The play's the thing." Stars, advertising, extravagant production fail when the material upon which they are expended is worthless.

The motion picture art, as has been truly said by keen students of the drama as well as

of the commercial phases of theatrical amusement, is only in its infancy. It has passed through the cheaper amusement houses, into the highest class theatres, is used in schools, churches, universities, public institutions and industrial and political work. It is not ephemeral: it has come to stay. It provides instruction and inspiration as well as amusement for millions, and at a pro rata cost which makes it universal in appeal. The motion picture has revolutionized the dramatic field in more ways than one: it is in the province of the ambitious playwright to carry its standard even higher, and by well-founded progress in his own work to attain rewards unequalled by that of any other line of literary work.

Of the companies which are purchasing scenarios, the following list gives the most important. It is correct at the time of publication, but the playwright should keep his own list up to date by constantly studying the reports of development, as indicated in the trade publications:

*Biograph Company, 807 East 175th Street, New York.*

*Essanay Film Mfg. Co., 1333 Argyle Street, Chicago, Ill.*

*Solax Company, Fort Lee, N. J.*

*Reliance Company, Riverdale Avenue, Yonkers, N. Y.*

*Universal Film Mfg. Co. (editing all scripts for Imp, Rex, Victor, Bison, Powers and Nestor), Mecca Bldg., 48th Street, New York.*

*Selig Polyscope Company, 20 E. Randolph Street, Chicago, Ill.*

*Eclair Film Company, Fort Lee, N. J.*

*Thomas A. Edison, Inc. Studios, 2826 Decatur Avenue, Bedford Park, N. Y.*

*Lubin Mfg. Co., Philadelphia, Pa.*

*The Vitagraph Co. of America, E. 15th Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.*

*Kalem Company, 237 West 23d Street, New York.*

*Keystone Film Company, Longacre Bldg., 42d Street, New York.*

*Kinemacolor Company, 1600 Broadway, New York.*

*American Film Mfg. Co., Ashland Block, Chicago, Ill.*

*Ramo Film Company, 102 West 101st Street, New York.*

*Pathé Frères, 1 Congress Street, Jersey City, N. J.*

*Mutual Film Company, 73 West 23rd Street, New York.*

*New York Motion Picture Company,  
Longacre Building, New York.*

*Frontier, St. Louis Motion Picture Com-  
pany, Santa Paula, Cal.*

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MECHANICS OF THE SCENARIO.

**A**FTER careful and intelligent work in the preparation of a scenario, the crucial point comes when it is sent out into the world to win or lose on its merits.

Too much care cannot be taken in the preparation of manuscripts. The scenario editor of a large company receives thousands of scenarios every week. He keeps a record of the name of the play, name and address of the author, and he tries in every way to safeguard it.

However, the writer should be very careful to avoid the chance of loss or damage to a manuscript.

A fine smooth quality of heavy white bond paper should be used of the size of 8½"x11". The slight difference in postage and in expense will be more than justified by the pleasure with which a handsome manuscript is read. The writer should always use fresh black ribbons on his typewriter so that every

word will be clear and distinct. Spelling and arrangement of the lines on the page should also be faultless.

To reiterate an earlier but most important hint, many a second rate scenario has so pleased a pessimistic editor by evidence of intelligence, cleanliness and clear thinking on the part of the writer that he has paid a first rate price for it, and then, personally made changes which would improve its quality for production.

Every manuscript should be typewritten. Not one out of fifty editors or directors will bother with the reading of a hand written manuscript because there are too many good ones sent in which are typewritten neatly.

If the scenario writer will remember that the editor is human, that his eyes are under a strain continually, applying this idea to every page of manuscript diligently, he will make himself persona grata with "the powers that buy."

The full name and address of the author should be typed in the upper left hand corner of the first page of the manuscript. On this first page, in the middle of the sheet should be presented the name of the play, with the statement that it is an original

photoplay for comedy or drama, as the case may be, and the name of the author.

After the writer has attained a certain recognition from companies, he is justified in stating the price which he desires for manuscripts on this first page as well, preferably in the lower right hand corner.

On the second page of the manuscript it is advisable to again write the name and address of the author in the upper left hand corner. On this page then, should be the name of the play in capital letters, and under it the word "Synopsis." If possible, this should be presented on one page by itself, single spaced.

Frequently when a manuscript is accepted, the synopsis page is given directly to the advertising manager of the company, while the rest of the manuscript is kept by the director for production. The synopsis is duplicated and is sent to the various moving picture magazines to be published in their advance notices, in most instances word for word.

On the third page of the manuscript should be presented the cast of characters as shown in the sample scenarios in this book. On the lower part of this page the author would do well to give a list of the



various settings needed, and a brief four or five word description for each one with the numbers of the scenes next to each in which they are used, shown in succession.

By this means the editor, at a glance, reads the story and turning over the page he finds the cast of characters neatly elaborated.

It should be noted that for photoplays we should not imitate theatre programmes and tack on *ad libitum* characters at the bottom of the manuscript such as "chorus of villagers, policemen, flower girls, pedestrians, etc.," but should specify the exact number of characters needed, no matter how small the part. For example: "Two constables, five soldiers, three flower girls."

A list of settings, both interior and exterior scenes, gives the scenario editor an opportunity to estimate the approximate cost of the entire picture from the producing end. The cost and the lack of it are important factors in the production of all photoplays.

The sooner a scenario writer masters the art of holding down production costs by simple settings, small casts and picturesque situations and landscapes, the sooner will his reward be definite and frequent. A play

with four leads, four extras and every day American settings can be as strong or stronger than one with two hundred actors. It will undoubtedly be more direct in action and appeal to producer and audience as well.

On the fourth page of the manuscript, the name of the photoplay should be in capital letters at the top, and then the action should be indicated, scene after scene, in numbered sequence. For the sake of legibility, letters, telegrams or signs which are thrown on the screen should be boxed in with a rule around them.

To make the pages attractive, and to bring out salient features, it is well to underline with red ink the words "Scene 1, Scene 2," etc., as well as the phrase describing the settings, which is well displayed by placing it directly under the scene number. Dropping a line below this, the particular action should be depicted, as shown in the examples in this book.

The best way to paragraph the action is to single space each scene and leave one space blank between the scenes.

The "business" or dramatic action should be indicated thoroughly in each scene. Seven or eight lines for each should suffice for almost any "business"—sometimes less, except

in instances of intense and involved dramatic action. Too much verbosity tires the director who has to alter the situations for his own purposes in many presentations.

It should be remembered that quotations are always given in "flashes." That is, during the action of a scene, the character will go through his part and the words desired to be shown to the audience will be interpolated in the film in printed sub-title form, at the exact moment that he speaks them. The action then goes on as he closes his mouth, to the finish of the scene. These speeches and "flash in" phrases are of great technical importance, and the success or failure of a picture may depend upon it.

Letters, telegrams and messages are generally exhibited in some manner during the action of a scene, and the author should indicate them with these words: "Letter on Screen" or "Flash."

The writer should remember that with telegrams and letters, it is frequently best dramatic policy to hold the spectators in suspense as to the contents of a letter. Great power may be given to a vital idea by skillful delay in presentation of a message to the spectator until several characters in the

play have read it and shown in different ways its effect upon them.

**SUSPENSE** in the bosom of the spectator is as necessary for the success of the dramatic presentation as **STRUGGLE** in the action of the characters!

The uncertainty of outcome, the surprise of the successive incidents of the play,—these keep the audience in sympathy with the participants, holding them spellbound, until the final scene or denouement.

The earmark of the amateur is the presentation of dramatic incidents in a manner so ingenuous as to let the observer know exactly how everything will turn out.

In other words, the spectator must be “kept guessing,” as well as the characters. The writer who can present his play in a direct manner, while maintaining suspense which will be evident to the editor and the director, is the one who has caught the great secret. The director can then embellish this suspense with his own skill, and by “business” which was undreamed of by the writer.

But, first, last and between whiles, the playwright must remember that he is selling not only his idea but the way in which it is arranged. He must above all be the director, as it were, of his script, so as to produce

upon the purchasing powers that be, a clear and complete understanding of its strength and value. Accordingly, too much care can not be expended upon the succinct and artistic involution of these sequential scenes!

At the end of this description of the action the author will increase his scenario's value to the director by adding a page marked: "Director's Sheet." This should have a column of numbers on the left margin indicating the order of the scenes worked out in the preceding pages.

In five or six words should be the indication of the action in that scene, as for example:

1. Young inventor working on patent. . . .
2. Landlady evicts inventor from house. . .
3. Applying in vain for job at factory. . . .
4. Inventor saves child's life in runaway. .
5. Inventor carried into millionaire's home
6. Inventor convalescing. Millionaire  
promises aid, etc. . . . .

Room should be left at the right hand side of the page for the director to mark down the number of feet of film used for photographing each scene.

When a director has worked for a week

on a well written manuscript on strong paper with simple, direct descriptions of the story, he is naturally impressed by the value of the author's work and is sure to remember the name of a painstaking writer.

It is very often the case that the director makes a request to the scenario editor for more stories from the same author; this has started many a writer on the road to permanent success as a photoplaywright.

Don't bind up the pages of a manuscript. Clasp with clips which can easily be loosened. Ribbons and stitches and other fancy tricks are a waste of time and irritating to a business-like editor or director.

It is advisable to use manuscript cover paper as the final sheet. This should be  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$  inches. It is placed at the back of the manuscript and the additional  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch is folded down over the front. The clips can then be slipped over the binding.

The scenario should be folded with two creases which divide it into three horizontal panels. The name of the scenario and the name and address of the author should be written or neatly hand-printed on the back middle fold of this cover paper.

The cover keeps the white sheets from being crumpled and can be replaced easily

when soiled. The title page should always be replaced if it contains finger marks or lead pencil scratchings. This can be easily done if the manuscript is bound with loose-fitting clips, instead of "clinchers."

When an editor receives a dog-eared manuscript marred by finger prints and blots, he naturally realizes that the scenario has been tried and found wanting in other studios and a certain prejudice is created in his own mind against it.

The best system for sending photoplays to the editors is to use two sizes of government stamped envelopes. These can be purchased in lots of fifty, cheaper with two cent stamps on them, than the plain ones in the stationery stores, while the paper is very strong and the mucilage is of the "stick-to-it" kind.

A 9-inch envelope should be used for the return of the manuscript with the writer's name and address distinctly written on it. It is advisable to write in the upper left hand corner of this envelope the name and address of the company to which it has been sent so that, should any accident blur the writer's name on the envelope, it stands a better chance of eventually escaping the Dead Letter Office.



This 9-inch envelope with the manuscript should be placed inside the nine and one-half inch envelope which bears the address of the company to which the manuscript is to be submitted. The writer's name and address should be given in the upper left hand corner of the larger envelope and in all cases manuscripts should be addressed to the "Scenario Editor" rather than to any particular person connected with the company.

In the motion picture profession scenario editors come and go (for better or worse!) with startling rapidity. It is illegal for a company to open an envelope personally addressed to an appointed editor and this in itself is the cause of lost manuscript, delayed replies and literary heartaches.

Now, here is a secret which saves postage in many instances, for many scripts are returned in company envelopes, with a two cent stamp and the author loses the full postage paid on his own envelope.

A two cent stamp, no matter how heavy the envelope, will suffice to bring back a manuscript upon its rejection, because it is a first-class matter. The author can pay the postage due at his own address. But the large envelope which goes to the producing



company should be carefully weighed in every instance and fully stamped.

Editors are human and when they or their company have to pay eight or ten cents in postage on a manuscript insufficiently prepaid, there is a natural inclination to deduct about \$10 interest on the investment, even should the scenario itself be valuable!

The insufficient postage bugaboo has scared away many a good scenario with magazine publishers as well as in motion picture work.

As for the recording of manuscripts, the photoplay writer should file at least one carbon copy of every play. To that carbon he should add a sheet showing to whom it was sent. The date of mailing and of its return should also be listed. In this way he keeps a perfect record of every manuscript and in case of loss of the original, he can easily make a duplicate.

According to law, no manuscript is sold for use in production until the author has signed a receipt or endorsed his name on check in payment for it.

When one company keeps a manuscript two or three months and the author has an opportunity to sell it in the interim, he is entitled to do so. He need not worry over

the consequences should the other company produce the play without having notified him of its acceptance. However, it is both prudent and courteous to send a notification of the sale, and a cancellation of the previous offer of the photoplay to the first company. This avoids embarrassment and a possible affront, in case the manuscript should have been accepted and held pending the action of a well meaning but careless editor.

To mail more than one copy of a story to purchasing companies at the same time is a breach of literary ethics which will effectually place an author on the "black list" if such a practice should be discovered.

One month is ample time for the consideration of a manuscript.

A few companies are courteous and large enough to provide facilities for judgment within three or four days. Yet, other good companies have methods of purchase—such as submission at weekly meetings to a board of producing directors—which make immediate decision on a good manuscript impossible.

A bad script can not be returned too quickly to satisfy the editor! So, in many instances "no news is good news," for a fortnight or so.

When you have a good original idea and a powerfully written script, do not be discouraged by repeated rejections, nor by the advice of editors who say "this topic is so-and-so," and "that one is trite." What one editor does not desire or need, another may. A story should be repeatedly kept in motion if it has merit, for the supply is not up to the demand.

Instead of attempting to rewrite a script after two or three rejections it is better to expend the same energy in creating a new photoplay.

After a story has gone the rounds it is not at all a bad idea to change the title, and if the script looks dirty to have it transcribed. But one thing is sure: good material, founded on virile situations and with that originality which an author can judge best in his own heart, is bound to sell some day.

The art of photoplay writing has much of the elements of ordinary commercial work. To make an impression upon the companies the author should systematically maintain a regular output of scripts. It is not too much to send one or two out weekly, in a definite sequence of companies.

If the mechanical work is good, and the

quality uniform or improving, the editors are bound to recognize the recurrence of the particular author's name. This is the application of the salesman's art; continual dropping will wear away the stone. Persistent writing improves the skill of the craftsman as well as establishing recognition of his name, and growing interest in his work among the people who can pay for it.

It is an admirable plan to keep "tabs" on the time required by various companies in returning manuscripts submitted. Some give decisions within three days, others—well-known and honorable at that—require two months to decide upon the purchases. What they do during this long period is a mystery, but the fact remains. By listing the prompt editors, the author may evolve a schedule of mailing, by which his manuscripts may visit six or seven studios during the first month, and then go on the long-time circuit afterward. Method, even applied to hope deferred, is sure to bring results!

This book is not a collection of "don'ts," but of "do's."

So, it is left to the reader to formulate his own schedule of iron-bound rules. The essential of success may be summarized simply in this closing text:

CHOOSE GOOD THEMES, COM-  
IC, ROMANTIC, OR DRAMATIC:  
WORK HARD IN PRESENTING  
THEM IN DRAMATIC FORM  
WHICH WILL BE WORTH MONEY  
TO THE PURCHASING COMPA-  
NIES!

KEEP THE MAILS BUSY WITH  
YOUR SCRIPTS. WRITE PER-  
SISTENTLY AND JUDICIOUSLY.

## CHAPTER V.

### SAMPLE SCENARIOS.

**I**NASMUCH as this is indeed a picture age—when illustrations are essential, for making, selling, buying, study,—we hereby offer two scenarios of opposite types, for the reader to see the exact form in which two scripts were presented to the editor and the director.

“Love Incog,” and “The Chap From Broadway” were produced as written (under different titles), by two different companies.

It may be of interest to know that both scripts were accepted without the author’s name attached, and in competition with more than one hundred others considered in the same manner.

The writer of this book directed both productions, and every scene was carried out exactly as indicated in the “business” of the manuscript.

Very few titles were given, in the photoplay script, because the stories worked them-

selves out without the need of explanatory printing. It cannot be definitely decided, in advance, as to just what titles are needed, and so they were left to the discretion of the producer, to be placed in afterwards.

It must be understood that this form of presentation is not dogmatic; the writer merely presents his own theories, after many years experience with successful scenarios, the actual work of selecting casts, staging the photoplays, handling the advertising of different companies, managing the sale and distribution of films and features.

The forms indicated here cover all the essential needs for an acceptable scenario, in as small space as possible. The ambitious and studious playwright can doubtless devise his own improvements on these suggestions, after observing what has already been accomplished with definite system and care.

## “LOVE INCOG.”

*An Original Comedy For Photoplay.*

### SYNOPSIS.

Harry Parsons, temporarily embarrassed by some bad stock speculations, loves rich Dolly Gray. Dolly is made miserable by an impetuous French Fortune Hunter, Count Briebert, whose suit is favored by Dolly's mother. Mrs. Gray, to clinch the title, invites him to a dance that night, to which Harry is invited by Dolly's brother Dan. Harry is almost captured by the creditors and the sheriff, but Dan helps him to escape over the roofs and in an automobile to his own home. The Sheriff gets on the trail, however, and follows to the Gray home. Here he waits for his victim. Dolly is disgusted at the Count's attentions and refuses to go to the dance, but Dan evolves a scheme. He promises his mother to bring Dolly and so Mrs. Gray leaves with the Count. Dan persuades Harry and Dolly to dress in each other's clothes and to go to the dance that way—without letting either know of the



other's plan. He tricks the Sheriff again, but the latter follows to the dance hall. Harry as the "beautiful stranger" makes a great hit with the fellows, especially the Count.

At the dance the pretended boy has great fun with the Count, insults him, challenges him, and fights a duel, proving that the Count is a coward and a sneak. Meanwhile, Harry is raising old nick with his pretended femininity and shocks the girls by dancing Turkey Trots and smoking cigarettes as he waltzes. The Count tries to make love to him, and he is "walloped" by Harry just as Dolly comes in, and recognizes the supposed girl. While the dance is going on, and complications setting in, Harry's lawyer follows to the country club to bring him the settlement due him, to square his finances. The young people are warned of the Sheriff's approach and they elude him as he enters the dance hall. Dolly agrees to elope, with Dan and the lawyer as witnesses and they hunt up a sleepy, jolly country parson who, despite his temporary bewilderment, enters into the fun and marries them—in their reversed costumes! They change their clothes in a comic situation and speed back to the dance, where the Sheriff is holding everyone up at

the pistol point. Harry pays his debts, proves his identity, and tells the joke, the Sheriff calls off his posse, and everyone is happy except the Count when the marriage is announced.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### PARTS:

Harry Parsons, a young club man in debt.

Dolly Gray, his sweetheart.

Mrs. Gray, her mother.

Dan Gray, her son, Harry's chum.

Count Briebert, a fortune chaser.

The Sheriff,—with a warrant for Harry.

### EXTRAS:

Harry's lawyer, a serious looking man.

The marrying Parson, a jolly old soul.

Ten girls at dance.

Ten fellows at dance.

The chauffeur.

The maid.

*Sets*—Exteriors 22. Interiors 30.

## SCENE PLOT

Harry's bachelor apartment 1-4-8.

Lawyer's office 2-21.

Exterior, Harry's residence 3.

Music room, Dolly's home 5-14-18-23-28-30.

Exterior Dolly's home,—porch, 6-13-17-19-27-31-37-41.

Front of Harry's apartment 7-11.

Roof of apartment building 9.

Back yard, on ground 10.

Street corner 12-16.

Dan's room 15-20-22-25-34-36.

Dolly's boudoir 24-26-29-33-35.

Entrance of driveway 32-38-40-42.

The Dance Hall 39-43-46-49-52.

Anteroom 44-47.

Exterior of dance hall 48.

Exterior, minister's house 50.

Interior, minister's house 51.

Lonely road 45.

## THE ACTION

### SCENE 1.

*Interior: Harry's bachelor apartment.*

Harry, worried, counting bills, calling up lawyer on telephone.

### SCENE 2.

*Interior: Lawyer's office.*

Lawyer at 'phone, shakes head. Flash in:

*"Not a cent has come from your stocks yet—there's five thousand due."*

*When it comes I'll bring it right up to you."*

Lawyer hangs up receiver.

### SCENE 3.

*Exterior: Harry's residence.*

Flash of sheriff outside Harry's residence, holding warrants.

### SCENE 4.

*Interior: Harry's apartment as in 1.*

Sheriff comes in and demands money. Threatening to take out furniture. Harry begs off, gives him drinks, etc., but Sheriff goes—giving him three hours. Other creditors come, presenting bills, but Harry is helpless.

### SCENE 5.

*Interior: Dolly's house—music room.*

Count Briebert calling. Mother gushing. Dolly shows that she wears a solitaire secretly. She is greatly bored. Dan, her brother, comes in, much disgusted at presence of Count. He exits to see his friend, Harry.

### SCENE 6.

*Exterior: Front of Dolly's home.*

Dan coming down steps angrily. Gets into the car, and drives off.

## SCENE 7.

*Exterior: Front of bachelor apartment building.*

Sheriff waiting around door. Dan enters, taking in meaning of situation.

## SCENE 8.

*Interior: Harry's apartment as in 1.*

Enter Dan, amused at Harry's grouch. He offers him all the money he has—Harry indicates that it is not enough. They peer out of the window. Dan suggests an escape, by the rear. He reminds Harry of dance that night. Harry packs a little grip with his dress suit, pumps, etc., and they slip out of room.

## SCENE 9.

*Exterior: Roof of apartment building.*

They peer over, see Sheriff in front. They come down fire escape or lightning rod. (Two camera positions.)

## SCENE 10.

*Exterior: On ground, back yard.*

They have escaped the Sheriff and the creditors. They disappear through doorway to street.

## SCENE 11.

*Exterior: Apartment building as in 7.*

Dan walks up and gets into car. Sheriff's suspicions are aroused. He tries to stop him but Harry orders chauffeur to speed.

## SCENE 12.

*Exterior: Street corner.*

Harry waits for Dan's automobile and as it comes, climbs into it with grip. Sheriff follows on the run and shakes fist as they ride away laughingly.

## SCENE 13.

*Exterior: Dolly's home as in 6.*

Motor drives up with Harry and Dan.

## SCENE 14.

*Interior: Music room as in 5.*

Count singing affectedly as Dolly plays, and mother sighs with bliss. Dolly sees the two boys go past in hallway, but dares not leave.

## SCENE 15.

*Interior: Dan's room.*

Boys arrive in Dan's room. They discuss their plans.

## SCENE 16.

*Exterior: Street.*

Sheriff on street—has taken number of auto, and following to home of registered owner.

## SCENE 17.

*Exterior: Front of Gray mansion as in 6.*

Sheriff arrives. Boys see him from second story window. He discovers number on machine to be one taken by him. He demands knowledge of Harry. Tough chauffeur orders him off the grounds. Sheriff shows badge and papers, and goes up steps. He rings the bell angrily and maid comes to door.

## SCENE 18.

*Interior: Music room as in 5.*

Mrs. Gray and Count frightened when maid and Sheriff enter. He demands Harry. Dolly shows that she understands but denies Harry's presence. Sheriff exits.

## SCENE 19.

*Exterior: Porch again as in 6.*

Sheriff exits threateningly, to wait down the street. Maid enters house again, slamming door.

## SCENE 20.

*Interior: Dan's room again as in 15.*

Harry and Dan worried and trying to figure out what they shall do. Harry calls up lawyer again, using Dan's telephone.

## SCENE 21.

*Interior: Lawyer's office as in 2.*

Lawyer shakes his head—no news of money coming.

## SCENE 22.

*Interior: Dan's room as in 15.*

Dolly knocks and enters. She warns them about the Sheriff whom they see through the window. She offers Harry the solitaire which he has given her to pawn for the necessary funds, but of course he refuses. She hears her mother calling. Dolly leaves Dan's room. The fellows are angry about the Count. Harry gets an idea and tells it to Dan who is delighted. Dan leaves room, while Harry begins to primp in burlesque manner before the mirror.

## SCENE 23.

*Interior: Music room as in 5.*

Dolly bidding farewell to Count, who kisses her hand smirkingly. She slaps his



face to her mother's horror. He leaves "cutey-cutey" and says he will call for her to go to the dance.

SCENE 24.

*Interior: Dolly's boudoir.*

Dan carrying dresses from Dolly's closet.

SCENE 25.

*Interior: Dan's room as in 15.*

*Later.* Dan is secretly giving Harry some supper, and Harry is half-dressed in girl's clothes, and smoking a pipe with his feet crossed. Harry begins to primp up now, and put on his wig, etc., which Dan has secured.

SCENE 26.

*Interior: Dolly's room as in 24.*

Dolly is crying, holding Harry's photo, and kissing it unhappily—fearing she can never wed him.

SCENE 27.

*Exterior: Dolly's home as in 6.*

Count comes up with silk hat and evening clothes to call for Dolly.

## SCENE 28.

*Interior: Music room as in 5.*

Mother dressed for the dance, greets Count effusively. Goes for Dolly. Count adjusts rose in buttonhole and admires himself.

## SCENE 29.

*Interior: Dolly's room as in 24.*

Dolly weeping. Mother enters and Dolly refuses to go to dance with the Count. Exit Mother furiously, after calling her daughter an ungrateful child.

## SCENE 30.

*Interior: Music room as in 5.*

Enter Mother, weeping, tells Count. Dan comes in, comforts her, promises to bring his sister, and the Count takes Mother out and into the machine he came in.

## SCENE 31.

*Exterior: Dolly's home as in 6.*

The Count escorts Dolly's mother to dance in automobile.

## SCENE 32.

*Exterior: At the entrance of the driveway.*

The Sheriff stops the car, but seeing only

the Count and Dolly's mother, he lets them pass out.

SCENE 33.

*Interior: Dolly's room as in 24.*

Enter brother, who tells her to cheer up. He has an idea. Asks if she would like to square things with the Count, and if she will do what he says. She promises, and Dan howls with mirth. He exits,—Dolly amazed. He returns with Harry's dress clothes.

SCENE 34.

*Interior: Dan's room as in 15.*

Harry almost ready with girl's costume, still smoking pipe, though.

SCENE 35.

*Interior: Dolly's room as in 24.*

Dolly is just putting on coat and struggling with the boy's necktie.

SCENE 36.

*Interior: Dan's room as in 15.*

Harry is ready. Dan has brought in one of Dolly's perfume bottles and douses him with it, to his disgust. Dan wraps an opera cloak about him and they go down stairs.

## SCENE 37.

*Exterior: Dolly's home as in 6.*

The machine has returned for Dan and his sister, and winking at the chauffeur, Dan takes Dolly into it, and they speed down the driveway.

## SCENE 38.

*Exterior: The driveway as in 32.*

Sheriff stops the auto, but seeing only Dan and a supposed girl, lets them go past.

## SCENE 39.

*Interior: At the dance.*

Dan enters with the beautiful stranger on his arm. "She" makes an immense hit, especially with the volatile Count, who asks for half a dozen dances. Dan hurries back for his sister.

## SCENE 40.

*Exterior: Driveway as in 32.*

Dan passing in and arousing the Sheriff's suspicions.

## SCENE 41.

*Exterior: Front Porch as in 6.*

Dan calls, and Dolly, assisted by maid, comes out in Harry's overcoat, entering the automobile with her brother.

## SCENE 42.

*Exterior: Driveway as in 32.*

The Sheriff, flourishing his revolver, stops auto, sure of culprit. He tugs at Dolly, through doorway, but Dan gives him a push which sends him sprawling on road. They speed away, and the Sheriff is after them, limping but determined.

## SCENE 43.

*Interior: At the dance as in 39.*

Enter Dan and his "gent" friend. Dan introduces him to girls who like him very much. "He" insults the Count, who challenges him to a duel. "He" promptly accepts and they step into an ante-room.

## SCENE 44.

*Interior: Ante-room or parlor, outside of dancing room.*

Count and three or four fellows, with Dan and "him." "He" goes for the Count and begins to punch him up, until the Count, not waiting for the duel, falls on his knees and begs for mercy. His apology is accepted and the party returns to the dance.

## SCENE 45.

*Exterior: Lonely road.*

Sheriff running along, with a limp and a waddle.

## SCENE 46.

*Interior: Dance hall as in 39.*

Girls all jealous of Harry, who is attracting all the fellows who want dances. Harry shows *some* stocking. This disgusts Mrs. Gray and makes a hit with the Count, who has been talking to her. He goes over and gets a dance at once. Harry asks Count for cigarette, and smokes it as he turkey trots with the Count. Chauffeur enters and warns Dan about Sheriff, who takes his sister out into ante-room.

## SCENE 47.

*Interior: Ante-room as in 44.*

Enter Dan and sister. They are worried now. But, just as they are planning a get-away, to dodge the Sheriff, in comes Harry and the Count. Dan and his sister hide behind a screen. The Count proposes to the supposed beauty, and declares that all he wants the other girl for is her money. Dolly is furious, but Dan restrains her. Harry simply mops up the ground with the Count, and Dolly recognizes her fiancé. She rushes

out and he recognizes her—they are both dumfounded. Harry proposes that they get away quickly. They agree and Dolly promises that she will marry him on the spot. They exeunt.

#### SCENE 48.

*Exterior: Before the club house, exterior of dance hall.*

They are just getting into the auto, when up rushes Harry's lawyer, asking if he is at the dance. Harry explains his identity, but the poor man is overcome. He finally recognizes Harry on close inspection, and gives him a wallet with the money which had been held up so long. They drag him into the auto for a witness and exeunt.

#### SCENE 49.

*Interior: Dance hall as in 39.*

Sheriff enters, heavily armed, terrorizes dancers by marching on floor and demanding Harry; Mrs. Gray faints in Count's arms.

#### SCENE 50.

*Exterior: Front of minister's house.*

He sticks head (in night cap) out of window, as party stops there and knocks. He lets them in.

## SCENE 51.

*Interior: Minister's parlor (glass flowers, old-fashioned stuff, etc.).*

Enter minister in dressing gown, carrying testament, and still wearing night cap—very sleepy. The young couple stand up. To his surprise, Dan “gives away” the apparent young man. The apparent young lady presents the ring. The “young man” promises to love, honor and obey, and the brother kisses the “young man” while the “young woman” pulls up his skirt and takes out the money for the marriage fee from his rolled up trousers, etc. The minister collapses, but is told of the whole joke, and then, being jolly, he kisses the “young man” himself and laughs. Harry whispers to him, and points to a screen. The minister nods, and leads the others out. Harry kisses his bride, and then they undress on either side of the screen (camera is tilted to show only top of screen and hands when they throw clothes over top of it; it is lowered again when they have exchanged clothes). Minister and others are called in and they rub their eyes at the change. Exeunt bidding good-bye to the parson.



## SCENE 52.

*Interior: Dance hall as in 39.*

Mother still unconscious, but comes to with a start when Count drops her to run forward and greet Dolly, who enters with Harry, Dan and the lawyer. She repulses him. The Sheriff levels his gun on the newcomers, but recognizes the lawyer with a start and lowers it. Harry hands him the money for the judgment and the Sheriff rubs his eyes, and cusses—he is determined to arrest him for resisting him, until Harry takes him aside and tells him the joke. The Sheriff laughs and blurts it all out—congratulating the happy pair. Everyone roars over the fun and the mother finally forgives the new son-in-law, when assured by the lawyer that he is now a very rich man, and the Count sobs and wrings his hands in grief, as he realizes that he has lost another fortune.

THE END.

## "THE CHAP FROM BROADWAY."

*An Original Drama for Photoplay.*

### SYNOPSIS.

**H**ENRY ALLEN, a hustling New Yorker, goes to the timber regions of Tennessee to make some big purchases of land for a rich syndicate. He goes to see old Ezekial Burrows, the biggest landholder of the neighborhood, whose pretty daughter Betsy, makes a conquest at sight. Betsy is beloved by a rough, handsome and unscrupulous mountain fellow, named Clay Nash, who intends to gain the girl for a wife and the old man's timber lands for himself. The arrival of the stranger enrages Clay, who determines to "show up" the city fellow by frightening him, and driving him back to the city in disgrace. Henry Allen puts up such a resistance, never lacking his sense of humor, that Clay is driven to desperation and with some of his mountaineer clansmen he tries to murder the visitor. They are told that Allen is a deputy for Uncle Sam, searching for illicit stills, and they swear to

kill the city chap. While Allen is inspecting timber lands with old Burrows he is captured by a treacherous ruse and taken to the gang headquarters, an old mountain farmhouse. Betsy has learned of their trickery and comes to the house to beg Clay for his release. Allen hears her talking with Clay as he slips away, and believes that she is really in love with the mountaineer. He escapes through a window, jumping to a tree nearby, and mounts his horse, galloping back to Burrows' home where he has been stopping. He signs the agreement to purchase the old man's holding, and is starting away on his long ride to the railroad with her father to guide him, when Betsy rides up breathlessly to warn them that the gangsters are after them. They barricade the house, awaiting the mountaineers. Clay enters, leaving his men outside on guard. Clay accuses Allen of stealing his sweetheart, but Betsy blushing declares that she loves not him, but the city man. Clay staggers, and starts to walk out, realizing his defeat. As he turns to look at them, in the doorway, the city man offers his hand and Clay's manly instincts conquer, and he acknowledges his defeat with his good wishes, promising to send his men away and to leave the new-

comer undisturbed. Old Burrows, his daughter and Allen follow Clay to the gate. As the happy lovers wave farewell, he starts on up the mountain road, head hanging and dragging his gun, as he leads his horse with the others. The last view shows a silhouette against the sunset sky as Clay ascends a high peak of the mountain to gaze sadly into the valley below, where he has lost his happiness, but gained the great lesson of manliness.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS.

### PARTS:

Henry Allen, the city chap, clever young New York business man.

Ezekial Burrows, old Tennessean, rich landowner.

Betsy, his pretty daughter.

Clay Nash, a handsome and dissolute mountaineer.

### EXTRAS:

Burrows' hired man.

First mountaineer.

Second mountaineer.

Third mountaineer.

Fourth mountaineer.

Director of Syndicate, a New York business man.

Second director.

Third director.

## SCENE PLOT.

### *Interiors:*

Office in New York—1.

Burrows' living room—5-7-9-16-18-35-39.

Mountaineers' saloon—24-26-29.

Small attic room—25-30.

### *Exteriors:*

All photographed around Palisades district.

30 scenes (either snow or bare).

## THE ACTION.

### SCENE 1.

#### *Interior: Office.*

Henry leaving his office and bidding farewell to directors of big syndicate, on his way to buy land in Tennessee. They wish him luck.

### SCENE 2.

#### *Exterior: Station.*

Henry arrives at mountain station of railroad. Met by Ezekial Burrows' hired man. Rides away with him.

## SCENE 3.

*Exterior: Mountain scene.*

Riding along mountainous country stretch with heavy timber. Man and Allen talking about the timber.

## SCENE 4.

*Exterior: Burrows' house.*

Arrival at house. Greeted by old man at front porch.

## SCENE 5.

*Interior: Burrows' house.*

Allen meets pretty Betsy and falls in love at sight. He gets down to business with the old man, who insists on making him comfortable at first. Log fire, big chimney, etc. Betsy gets good things for him to eat. Henry lays out proposal of the syndicate. Old man tells fears of the mountaineer gang led by Clay Nash.

## SCENE 6.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

Clay Nash arrives with two other horsemen. Inquires from hired man about purpose of stranger. Goes up steps, listens at door and then enters.

## SCENE 7.

*Interior: Burrows' house as in 5.*

Clay enters and breaks up conference. Clay very insulting to the stranger, while Allen is diplomatic and "kids" him along. Quarrel between Clay and Betsy there, and Clay exits threatening the stranger, and daring him to come outside.

## SCENE 8.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

Clay comes outside, and gives orders to his two men to wait in ambush for the stranger.

## SCENE 9.

*Interior: Burrows' house as in 5.*

Allen talks a minute with the old man and his daughter, who warns him. He laughs, pulls out his revolver, and throws it on the table, to show them that he has a different method.

## SCENE 10.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

Allen on porch, he laughs at Clay, and walks down steps with him.

## SCENE 11.

*Exterior: From window.*

Ten-foot flash of girl and old man at window, watching fearfully.

## SCENE 12.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

Allen and Clay walking along, and Allen asking the other to help him buy up timber lands. Clay denounces Allen as a revenue spy. Allen laughs, and Clay, seeing a good chance, takes off his hat, and steps to one side. It is a signal, and two gun shots come from a clump of nearby bushes. Allen drops low, and is unhurt. Instantly he springs up, grabs Clay by the neck and gives him some jiu-jitsu, holding him between the two hidden marksmen and himself. He beats up Clay, gets his gun away from him, holds it at his stomach and commands the two men to come forth, or he will kill their leader. They grudgingly do so.

## SCENE 13.

*Exterior: Flash.*

Flash of old man and Betsy on porch with rifles in hand.



## SCENE 14.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

Allen gives Clay a blow, knocks him down and kicks him, and then hands him his gun back, telling him to get out. The two men glare at each other, but Clay's face falls and he looks down. The mountaineers sneak away.

## SCENE 15.

*Exterior: Porch again as before.*

Allen joining the two. Betsy now weeping as though her heart was broken. Allen thinks she loves Clay, and he hesitates, then thanks the father and daughter. He sadly goes inside, with Betsy and her father following.

## SCENE 16.

*Interior: Burrows' house as in 5.*

Old man and Allen, smoking before big fireplace. Betsy bids them good night, leaving them to talk over plans of timber sale. Betsy comes back and looks at Allen, without his knowing it, and unseen by him, slips his fur cap from the hook on the wall, kisses it, and takes it to bed with her. (Fade out.)

## SCENE 17.

*Exterior: Moonlight. Old Farm House.*

Clay and his gangsters drawn up before an old farm house, planning deviltry against the newcomer.

## SCENE 18.

*Interior: Burrows' house as in 5.*

## NEXT MORNING.

Betsy, tidying up living room, and setting breakfast table. She takes down a photograph of Clay, which she looks at and cries over. Allen enters unseen, and looks over her shoulder, sees the picture and turns away believing that she loves Clay. He leaves the room, and then misses seeing her tear up the picture scornfully, as she realizes that the old love was not worth while—and that Clay is a bad man. Allen re-enters the room with the old man, and they start at breakfast. He is very downcast, however, and cannot eat, despite the attention of the girl.

## SCENE 19.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

Allen and old man, coming down porch steps and mounting horses, to go out and see

the timber. Allen and the girl wave good-bye.

#### SCENE 20.

*Exterior: Burrows' lands.*

Out in the woods, Ezekial showing his possessions.

#### SCENE 21.

*Exterior: Another woods scene.*

Clay and men following in the woods.

#### SCENE 22.

*Exterior: Woods scene.*

Allen and Ezekial met by two horsemen, who tell Ezekial some cock-and-bull story, and get them separated. Clay and his men close in on the city fellow as soon as Ezekial is out of the way, and bind him, at the point of guns.

#### SCENE 23.

*Exterior: Old farm house as in 17.*

Clay's headquarters. Mountaineers around. They hurriedly roll barrels out of sight, as Clay rides up with prisoners, but Allen notices this. Prisoner taken inside.

## SCENE 24.

*Interior: Saloon, "blind tiger."*

In the farm house, regular speak-easy, with sanded floor, tables, etc. The men crowd around Clay and his prisoner, who is made to write a letter to old Burrows, demanding money for his ransom. The prisoner is roughly treated, cursed and insulted by the mountaineers. He is led upstairs to a little prison on the loft.

## SCENE 25.

*Interior: Attic room, rough walls.*

Clay leads in Allen, bound. Leaves him with threat of death, after lashing him across face, leaving welt.

## SCENE 26.

*Interior: Saloon as in 42.*

The mountaineers getting rougher and rougher. More drink. Clay tells them that their prisoner is a revenue spy, and they want to lynch him. But he tells them to get a rope, and wait until the messenger has taken the demand for money to old Burrows.

## SCENE 27.

*Exterior: Burrows' home as in 4.*

Betsy leaving home, worried about the absence of her father and visitor.

## SCENE 28.

*Exterior: Woods scene.*

Betsy meets her father racing back on horseback, and he tells her of the disappearance of Allen. She tells him to ride for home, and she will search in a certain place. He wants to accompany her, but she tells him to do as she bids, scorns fear, and insists that she has a plan to save Allen. Betsy rides along toward Clay's house.

## SCENE 29.

*Interior: Saloon as in 24.*

Clay decides to leave and attend to the ransom matter himself. He exits.

## SCENE 30.

*Interior: Attic as in 25.*

Allen is working himself loose from ropes. He succeeds, and hurries to window, where he slips out.

## SCENE 31.

*Exterior: Roof of house, showing slanting roof.*

Allen slides down from window and then jumps to tree. Before getting down, he sees Betsy coming.

## SCENE 32.

*Exterior: Showing Allen up in tree and farm house.*

A few feet back Allen is seen up in tree. Clay comes out of house, just about to mount his horse. Betsy approaches and intercedes for Allen. Allen thinks it is a rendezvous, instead, and broken-hearted he turns away and under cover of their talking makes his escape. He cuts his horse from the hitching post in the rear, and rides off through the country. Clay, meanwhile, refuses to help the girl unless she marries him. She refuses. He tries to kiss her, and Betsy lashes him severely with her riding whip, taking his gun from him, and making him apologize on his knees for his insult. She mounts and rides home. Clay goes inside, wiping blood from his face and swearing vengeance.

SCENE 33.

*Exterior: Woods scene.*

Flash. Allen riding through woods.

SCENE 34.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

Allen dashes up and rushes inside, where the old man is waiting.

SCENE 35.

*Interior: Burrows' house as in 5.*

They draw up the papers, Allen delivers the check, obtains the deeds, etc., and then starts away. The old man agrees to take him to the railroad. Allen is very sad, and asks the old man to give him a picture of Betsy, which he does.

SCENE 36.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

They are starting away with their horses, when Betsy gallops up. She warns them of Clay's pursuit, which she has heard. They hurry into the house to barricade it.

## SCENE 37.

*Exterior: Woods scene.*

Clay and gangsters riding rapidly for revenge and a lynching party.

## SCENE 38.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

The gangsters remain on their horses at Clay's command to guard the house. Clay, swearing vengeance, knocks on door and is admitted.

## SCENE 39.

*Interior: Burrows' house as in 5.*

Inside, Clay is covered by the weapons of Ezekial, his daughter and Allen. He accuses Allen of stealing his sweetheart, but Betsy, blushing, declares her love for the Chap from Broadway. Clay drops his head and turns to go, but Allen offers his hand. Clay braces up and takes it like a man, saying that he will no longer contend, and will order his men away. He wishes the successful rival luck. Betsy impetuously offers her hand to him. Clay leaves, dragging his rifle. They all follow him out.



## SCENE 40.

*Exterior: Burrows' house as in 4.*

Clay comes down steps and brusklly orders his men to go back to headquarters and leave him alone—forbidding them to persecute Burrows and Allen further. Astounded, the men gallop away. Clay stumbles awkwardly, blinded by tears, as he approaches his own horse, which he takes by the bridle. Ezekial, Betsy and Allen follow and wave good-bye to him, as he dejectedly starts up the rocky trail above, leading his steed, and dragging his gun.

## SCENE 41.

*Exterior: High cliff on the mountain.*

Clay ascends to the edge of the precipice, leading his horse, and looks over the valley beneath him. He takes off his hat and stands there, silhouetted against the sunlight (orange colored film), and the picture fades out into blackness.

## CHAPTER VI.

### EPILOGUE.

**T**HE future of the motion picture drama is a mooted question. Theatrical producers have tried to cheer themselves with the thought that each season was the climax of its popularity.

Instead, each season has seen a broadening of cinematographic effort and the increase of popular interest; where five years ago the attendance of the moving picture show by well-to-do people was considered a "slumming expedition" it has now become a standard amusement at which wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of the best classes in America are the most devoted patrons. Masculine appreciation has increased in equal ratio.

Sterling financial interests have directed their activities toward this business during the last year. It is undeniable that a greater share of profits can be made in this branch of the amusement field than in any other, for it is a cash business with quick returns and

of the "rolling snowball" nature where one success trails many others in its progress.

To be extremely candid, until the very recent past, the majority of men who have had control of the motion pictures received their dramatic training on the tanbark of the circus, in button factories and similar haunts of the Muses. A few of the powerful magnates even to-day are recruits from the ranks of saloon keepers, ward politicians, resort proprietors and still more questionable industries.

With them have grown up a coterie of unscrupulous adventurers who have inveigled into their projects the money of other people and who, by stock jobbing and commercial legerdemain have outwitted their associates and obtained control of some of the most important companies producing to-day.

The intimate biographies of the producing managers would out-rival some of the underworld masterpieces which have recently caused so much public comment and police activity!

It is for this reason that the higher aspects of the photoplay drama have so frequently been ignored. Water will not rise above its own level and only recently have the powers

higher up in many of the motion picture clicques yielded to the demand for high moral standards and first-class dramatic production in their work.

But the entrance into this field of legitimate investors, shrewd and broad-visioned business men, has purified the atmosphere to a great extent. Many producing companies which from their inception were run on honest business principles against heavy odds, have been benefited by the recruits.

The satisfaction with which the general public has received the improved productions proves its commercial value by the unprecedented prosperity and the steady increase in demand for more pictures of the better sort. No longer does the wise producer play exclusively to the "rough-necks." He finds it better policy to stage his pictures for the educated classes, rather than for the immigrants, servants and the illiterates who have hitherto been considered the best paying patrons.

The proprietors of the film exchanges throughout the country are clamoring for historical, literary and the finest of dramatic productions, preferring them to the frazzled themes and hackneyed productions which sufficed in the past. The producing com-

panies have at last awakened to an understanding of the value of "theme" and the advantage to be gained from the employment of first-class actors and actresses. They pay higher salaries to artists than most of the stage producers can afford.

Directors of photoplays are paid a great deal more money than theatrical managers; with them as with the actors, their year of work contains fifty-two weeks, while the theatrical year is a record breaker nowadays which runs for thirty weeks. There is no dull season. In summer, when theatres are dark, the moving picture companies are most active: in winter, they carry on their producing (where summer scenes are needed) in California and Florida, or travelling into foreign lands.

The life and work is attractive and steady in its remuneration. It is steadily drawing upon the resources of the theatrical world for its best people.

The road shows of theatrical successes have received decreasing interest with each succeeding month. Lamentable as this may seem it has its benefits for the American play-goer. Through the medium of the cinematograph one good production, presented by the best obtainable artists, and

under the most perfect conditions attainable is seen by sixteen millions in a year, as against one hundred thousand who would see a successful play in the same time.

This tremendous movement which is admitted by all to be in its "rising act," will undoubtedly culminate in greater rewards for the writers of the plays and scenarios to be produced to meet the demand. There is no reason, even to-day, why a playwright should not receive at least \$200 for every good scenario which is accepted in view of the fact that not less than a thousand dollars will be expended on its production and the profit vary from one hundred to one thousand per cent.

A professional man—a doctor, lawyer, dentist, civil engineer—must devote at least three years of study to his profession. After his graduation from the college it is generally necessary for him to fight against discouragement for several years before he establishes his practice with a successful remuneration. Therefore, it seems certain that an ambitious writer who will devote time, study and energy to the perfection of his scenario technique for a few months, can attain to a position of remunerative success

far beyond the bounds of other intellectual work.

Scenario writing, as an art, should be worked out on a scientific basis. The writing of a scenario after the general mastering of principles, should not consume more than one day. An energetic author should produce three or four each week even with the present rates of \$25 as a minimum for a good script. He should be able, after two months of "laying in stock" to sell one out of every three photoplays he has created.

Within the next year or two the field of the photoplay will undoubtedly develop into more educational, political and religious lines than it has in the past. Thus, the writers who are familiar with the general field, with its details and its big ideas at his finger tips, will be in the line for promotion to the new positions opened by such growth in this work.

It is safe to say that the majority of people now in the motion picture business are in a rut. Most of the actors are so busy with their work that they neglect opportunities to keep abreast with the trend course of national drama. The directors, many of whom regard the theatre, the progress of literature and art, and political movements as alien to

their own work. After the hours of their undeniably strenuous work, they, like the motion picture actors, prefer to spend their time in observing current productions of rival companies in exhibition theatres or to relieve their tense nerves in conviviality.

Two-thirds of the executive men in the motion picture business to-day are so busily juggling stock transactions, endeavoring to outplay their associates in the game of "dagger-dagger, who's got the dagger?" that their knowledge of artistic theatrical conditions is extremely short-stopped.

Here then, is the opportunity for the outside man, for the writer who can study staged as well as screened drama and who can read the good old books and the good new ones, who can interpret the vital thought in his times and inject into his work unprejudiced enthusiasm with a vision of true artistic perspective. Men may come and men may go, but as Mr. W. S. Gilbert remarked, the terrestrial globe continues rolling on just the same! The director, actor or manager who believes that he has mastered all the secrets of his craft is left behind.

It is the independent writer, the free lance not compelled to kow-tow to film politicians, who can win for himself a recognition of his



genius (which might be called "his inspiration plus perspiration") which in the future enables him to participate in these film-politics so strenuously through the power of his pen that he can unite realities with ideals, benefitting motion pictures and his own exchequer.

Photoplay writing leads to many avenues of unique endeavor and reward. Success is gained only by the sound foundation of basic knowledge and the determination which will ever give encouragement, overcome discouragement and technical difficulties.

It is not to be understood that the author decries the value of studying the present output of motion pictures assiduously. Far from it! This should be done in the exhibition theatres, motion picture magazines, and if possible by personal observation of studio production work. But the author who has designs upon a profitable future should never forget that future. He should definitely work for it by applying to the complete understanding of present conditions, his own inspirations and original thought for future work, treating photoplays as real drama, rather than as pantomimes and "thrillers" not governed by the literary laws developed after centuries of culture.

The daring and original work of to-day is the success of to-morrow.

The man who has one eye on the time clock and the other on the cash register, ignoring the calendar of the days and months to come is seldom apt to climb over the walls of to-day's limitations to a bigger and better future!

THE END..







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